



EAUC-Scotland Conference

The Elephants in the Room

Tuesday 26 November 2019
The Lighthouse, Glasgow



@EAUCScotland
#EAUCS2019



Climate Anxiety

Climate Anxiety



Nadine Andrews, Visiting Researcher, Lancaster University Pentland Centre for Sustainability in Business; Climate Psychology Alliance

Harriet Harris, University Chaplain and Head of the Chaplaincy Service, University of Edinburgh

Climate Anxiety



Nadine Andrews

Visiting Researcher, Lancaster University Pentland
Centre for Sustainability in Business; Climate
Psychology Alliance



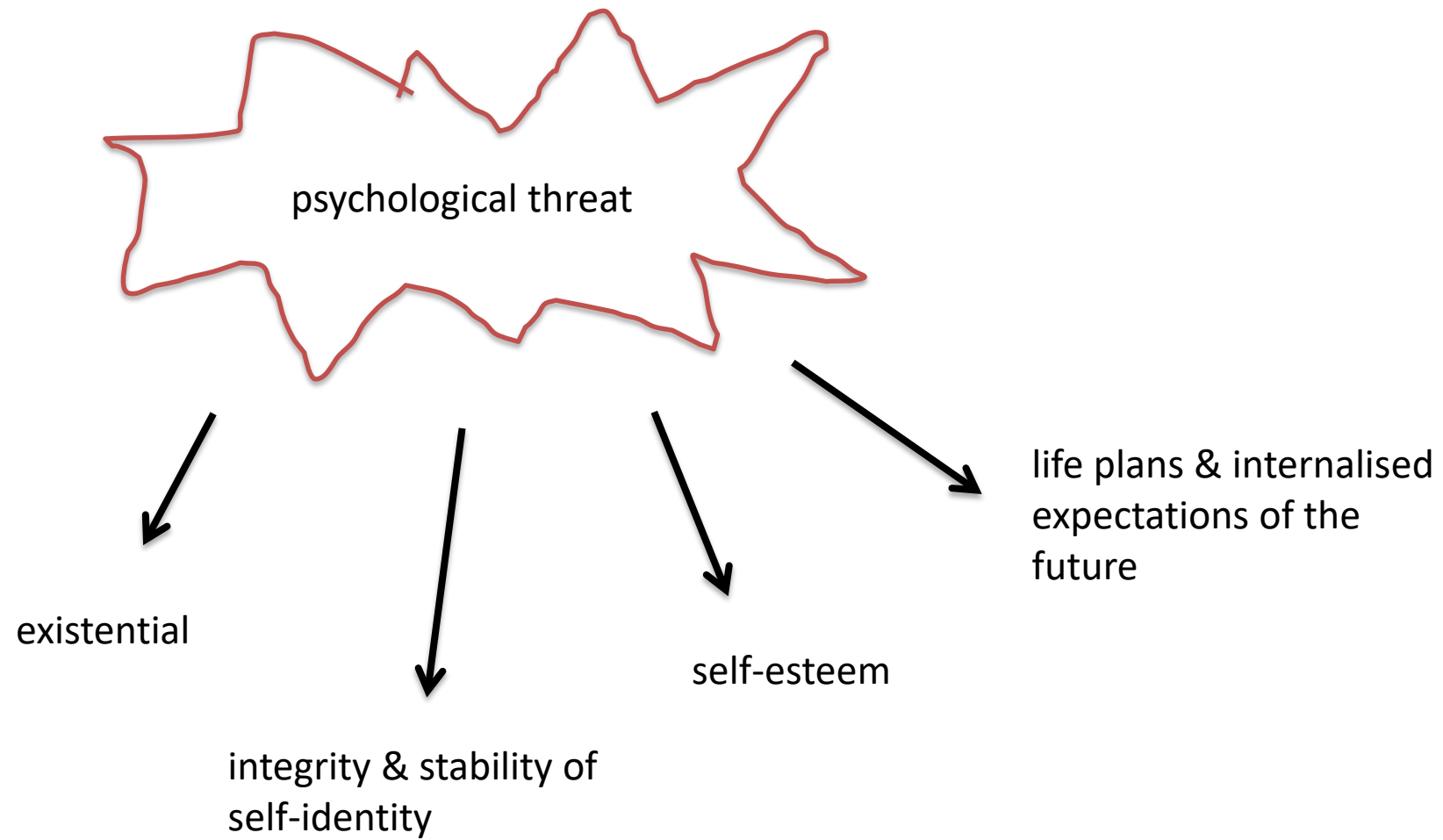
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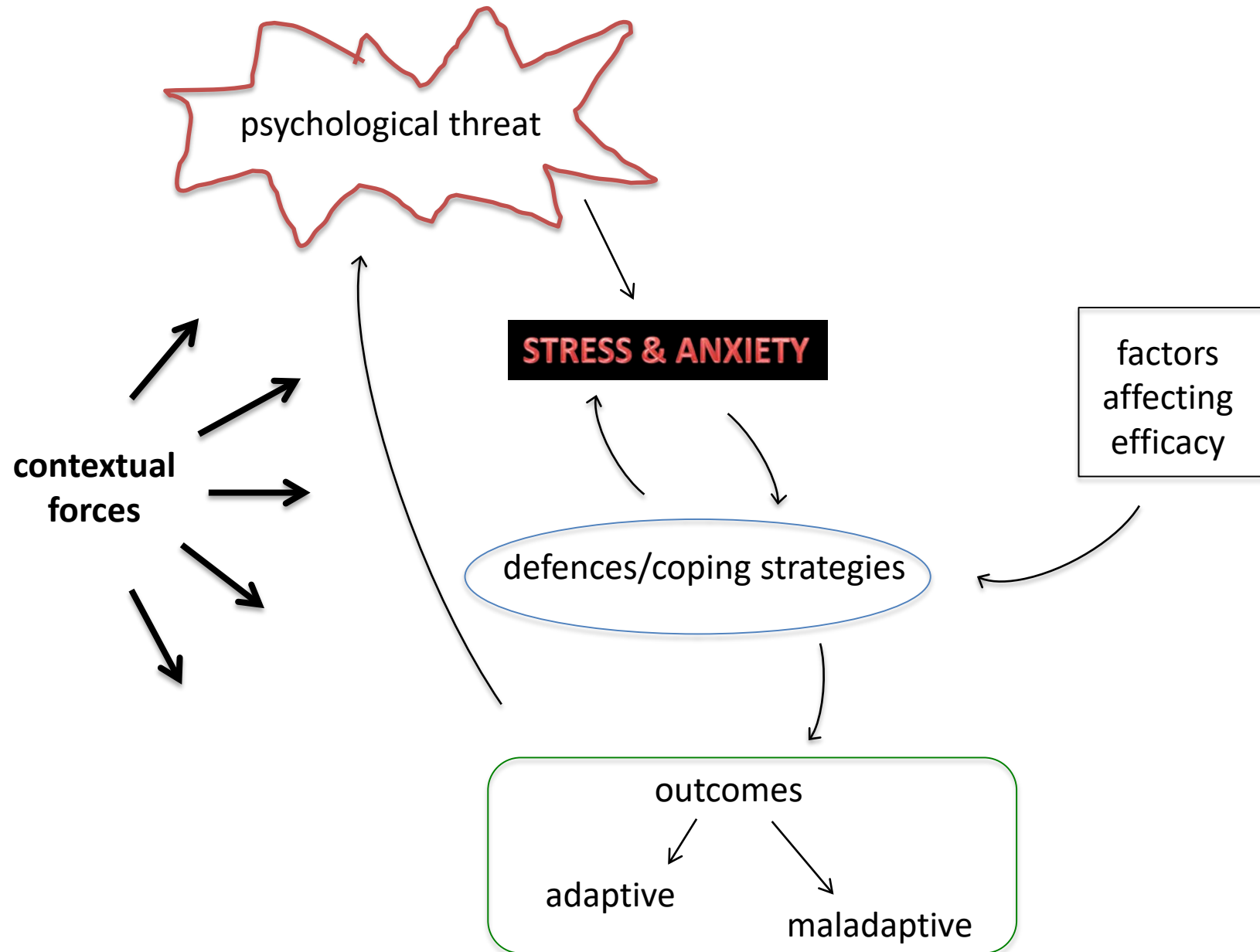
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Climate anxiety workshop

Dr Nadine Andrews
Climate Psychology Alliance





Maladaptive defences/coping

Type	Strategy
Denial / disavowal of facts	rejecting, deflecting, ignoring, selective attention, restricting exposure
Distortion of facts	reduce size of threat, trivialise, put threat into future
Shifting or denial of responsibility	projection, blame-shifting, diffusion of responsibility, derogation of out-group, denial of guilt, splitting, idealisation, regression, bargaining
Avoiding thinking or feeling	suppressing thoughts/emotions, distancing, reducing intensity, intellectualising, depersonalise, generalise, compartmentalising, apathy, escapism, numbing, disembodiment, pleasure-seeking, selective attention
Diversionsary activity	displaced commitment, minor behaviour change, single action bias, domesticating wild nature
Non-action	resignation, passivity, 'lazy' catastrophism
Self-deception	wishful/magical thinking, unrealistic optimism, illusion, delusion
Active catastrophism	self-destructive behaviour, wishing for societal collapse
Self-enhancement	extrinsic goal orientation, self-protection, materialistic behaviour, survivalism, narcissism, identification with idealised figures



Adaptive coping

Type	Strategy
Engaging with facts	seeking information, acceptance of facts
Emotion regulation	engaging with, working through difficult emotions
Considered reflection on death & impermanence	meditation, prayer
Collaborative problem solving	working with others
Compassion	self-transcendence values orientation (care for human and nonhuman beings)
Connecting with nature	



helpless
grief
upset
loss
despair
guilt
hopeless
worry
disgust
sadness
fear
anger
shame
anxiety
fear
melancholy
apathy
depressed

Dr Nadine Andrews

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Climate Psychology Alliance

climatepsychologyalliance.org

<https://www.facebook.com/ClimatePsychologyAllianceScotland/>

Edinburgh Nature meetup group

<https://www.meetup.com/EdinburghNatureMeetup/>

Climate Anxiety



Harriet Harris
University Chaplain and
Head of the Chaplaincy Service
University of Edinburgh



Elephants in the room: climate anxieties and some possible responses

Harriet Harris, University Chaplain and Head of Chaplaincy Service; Co-Director, Global Compassion Initiative; Associate Fellow, Clinical Educator Programme; Honorary Fellow of the Divinity School.

University of Edinburgh

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A large elephant stands in the center of the frame, facing forward. Its trunk is slightly curved to the right. The elephant's skin is a mottled brown color with visible wrinkles. The background consists of a vast, flat savanna with dry, yellowish grass. In the distance, there are low, rolling hills under a hazy, overcast sky. The overall tone of the image is somber and documentary.

George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant'
Published by *New Writing*, 2, Autumn 1936

► Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

We need a transforming narrative

Climate change is hard to face, and the world is complex, and our fears and motivations are complicated.

- a. We may seem not anxious
- b. We may be paralysed with anxiety
- c. We may be active, and activity assuages anxiety

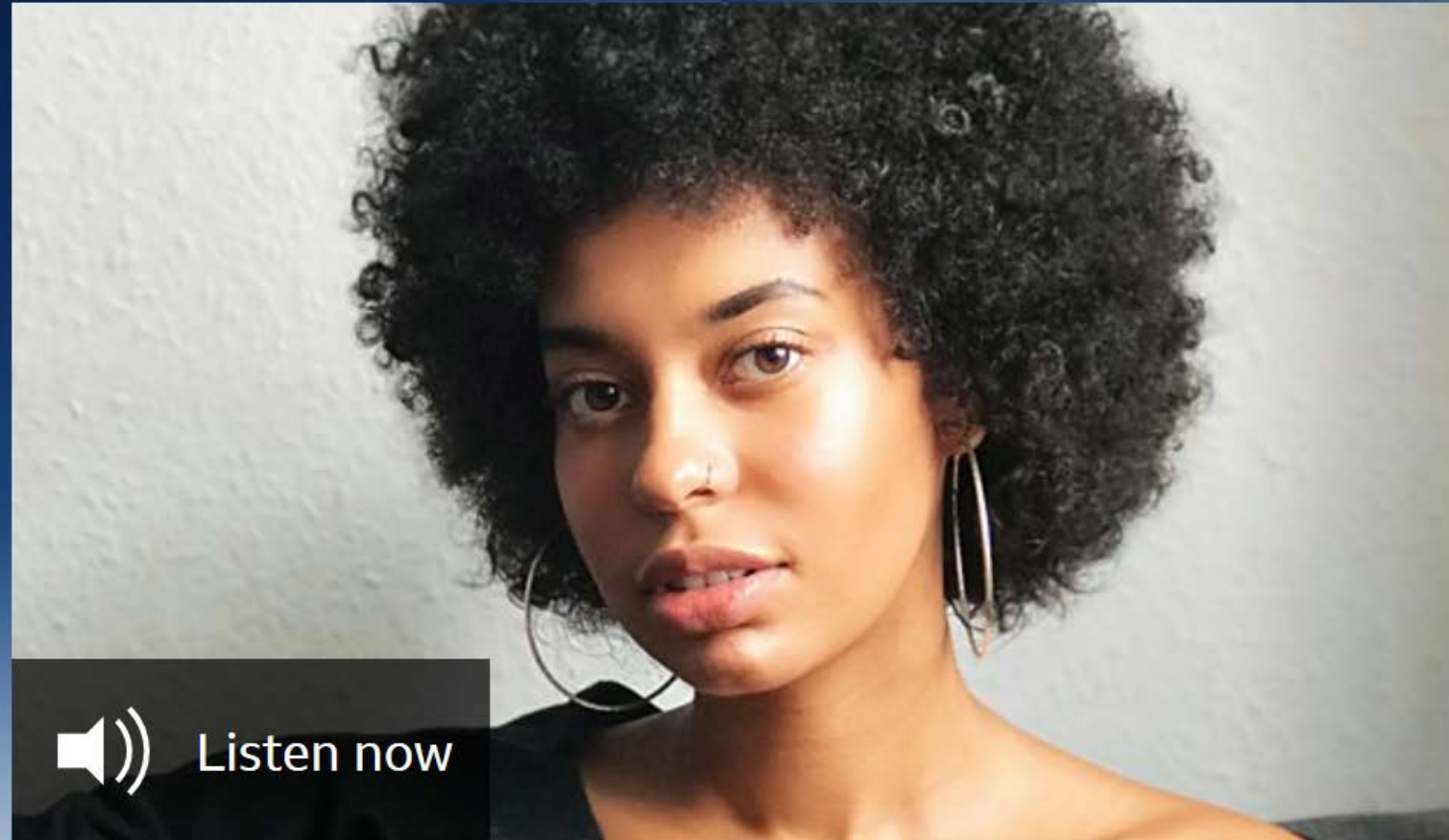


Seeming not anxious

- ▶ School marches
- ▶ Experience with the Green-filming UoE course
- ▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0009zbw>

The 21st Century Curriculum

Home



Listen now

As a teenager, the writer Varaidzo lost interest in school. She talks to teenagers about the "educational dip" and whether changes to the curriculum might make them more engaged.

Available now
🕒 28 minutes

Paralysed by anxiety

■ There's a very real chance that I'm going to die in a horrible way, having lost all my loved ones in some climate catastrophe. I used to take comfort in nature and the seasons, but now I feel like that has been taken away from me too. And the even sadder thing is that, despite my anxiety about this, I can't bring myself to actually participate in any protests or actions that could make a difference, because I'm too scared. What I'd like is some advice about how to put this fear to good use, rather than being paralyzed by it. I don't know how to live in this world if the only way to bear everything is to pretend it's not happening.

■ <https://www.thecut.com/2019/09/ask-polly-im-paralyzed-by-anxiety-about-climate-change.html>

■ Photo, School child protesting in Edinburgh, March 2019. Jeff J Mtichell/Getty Read more: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2220561-stressed-about-climate-change-eight-tips-for-managing-eco-anxiety/#ixzz65pxx2vZa>





Dear Paralyzed

- You can be happy as the sky falls. It doesn't require denial. The happiest people I know are the ones who always keep the possibility of death close at hand. Acknowledging reality instead of hiding from it is the key to tackling your anxiety and depression, and it's also the key to embracing the fact that life is all about hard work and struggle. Facing hideous obstacles and feeling doomed is a feature of living, not a bug. When you face our dark reality without hiding from it or avoiding it, you recognize that survival itself is worth celebrating and this planet is worth fighting for, even when the fight looks hopeless. You can believe that the fight is hopeless and still fight. You can align your heart and your mind with the fight while also preparing for a future that is very different from the future you were promised.

What is happening to our common home?

Papal Encyclical, Laudato Si (May 2015), reflects our myriad anxieties

- ▶ 'Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. The problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis.'
- ▶ 'distractions constantly dull our consciousness of just how limited and finite our world really is.'
- ▶ 'ecological' neighbourhoods have been created which are closed to outsiders in order to ensure an artificial tranquillity. Frequently, we find beautiful and carefully manicured green spaces in so-called 'safer' areas of cities, but not in the more hidden areas where the disposable of society live.'
- ▶ 'The earth's resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production.'



'Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us.'

- 'Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.' (LS 19)



Laudato Si, 'Praise be to you'



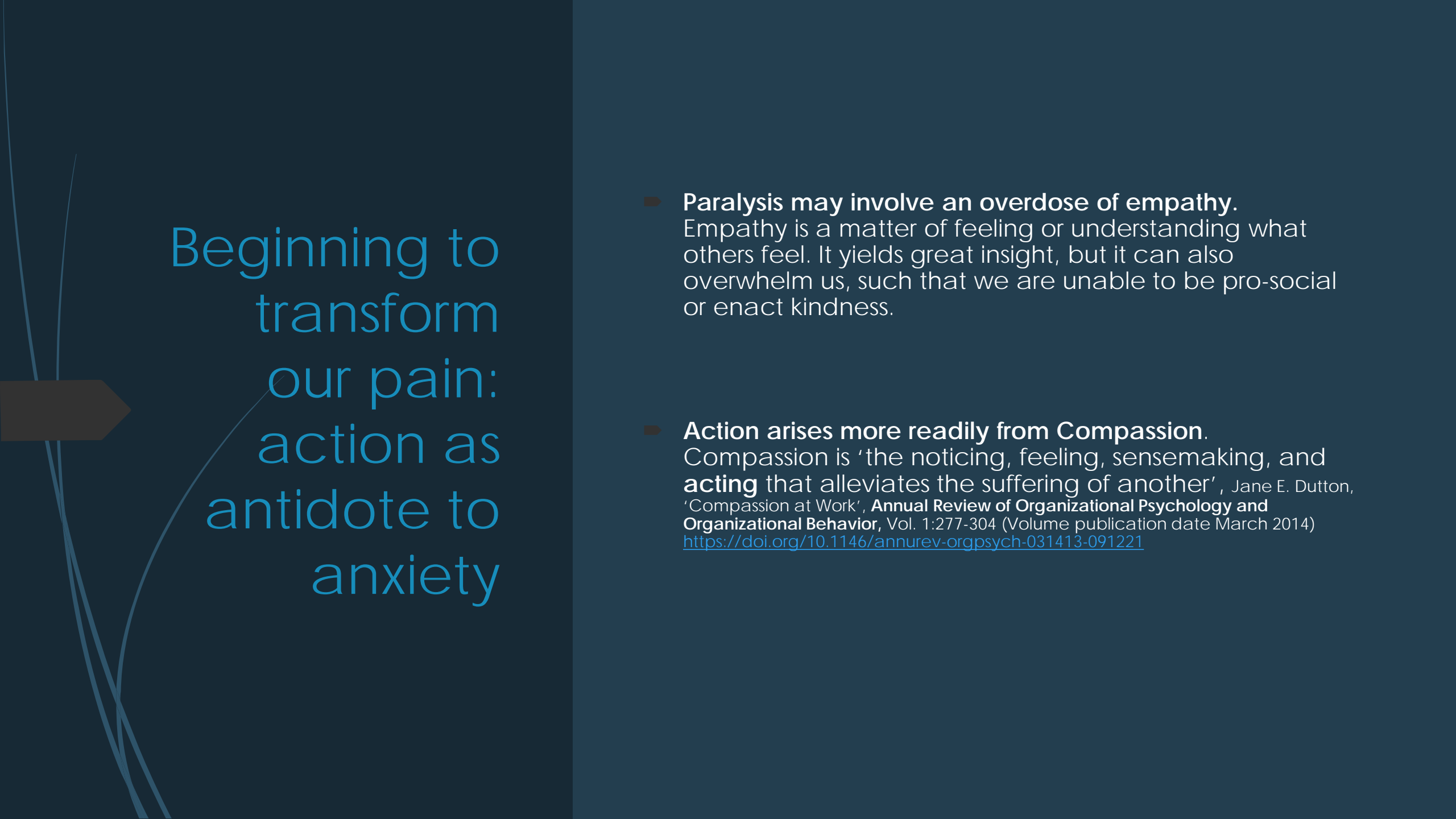
"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs"*

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts...is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements...

* Canticle of the Creatures, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 1, New York-London-Manila, 1999, 113-114.

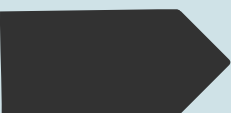
Pain that is
not
transformed
is transmitted

Richard Rohr



Beginning to transform our pain: action as antidote to anxiety

- **Paralysis may involve an overdose of empathy.**
Empathy is a matter of feeling or understanding what others feel. It yields great insight, but it can also overwhelm us, such that we are unable to be pro-social or enact kindness.
- **Action arises more readily from Compassion.**
Compassion is 'the noticing, feeling, sensemaking, and **acting** that alleviates the suffering of another', Jane E. Dutton, 'Compassion at Work', **Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior**, Vol. 1:277-304 (Volume publication date March 2014)
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091221>



Detachment enables us to acknowledge anxiety and other difficult emotions, and helps us out of paralysis.

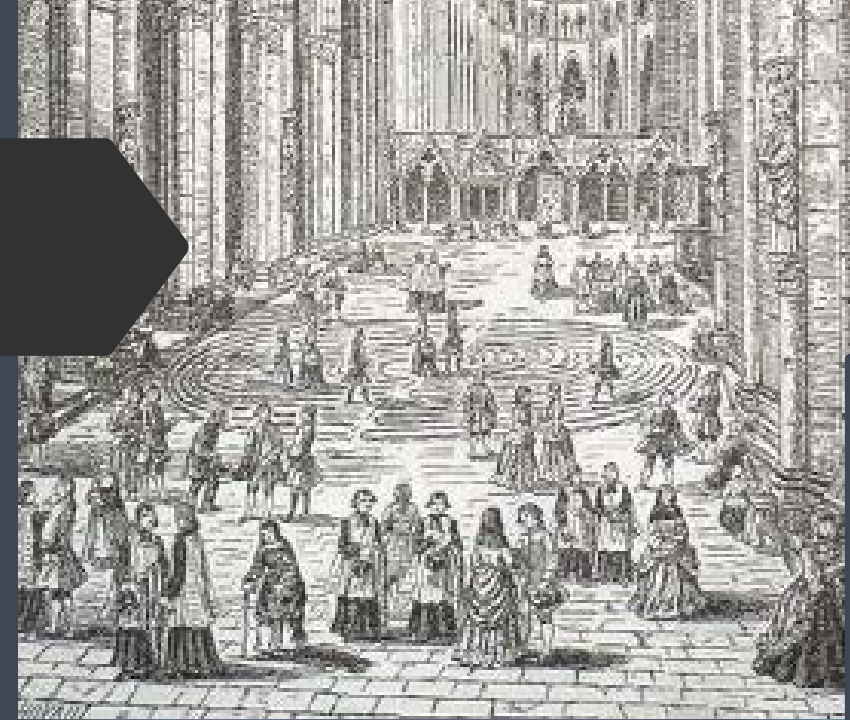
- We free ourselves and the other by detaching compassionately, and wishing for the other's good for their own sake.
- Attachment is a 'near-enemy' of compassion. It motivates us to want the other's good for the sake of our own happiness, which can get messy and intensify our own feelings of distress.
- Spiritual practices such as meditation, or focusing on gratitude, or on ultimate purpose (What's really important here? What really matters? What's the bigger picture?) help with detachment.

Spiritual practice and dispassion or detachment

- Am I capable of taking my intense feelings, positive and negative, out of the depths of my guts for a moment, and putting them where I can look at them – and where Christ can look at them? [Dispassion is about] developing some sense of our freedom from the projections, the expectations, the busyness that constantly threaten to hem us in (Rowan Williams, *On Discipleship*, pp. 77-8).
- we can bring mindfulness to thoughts, listening to them without judging or repressing them, and without becoming absorbed in the flow of what they're telling us. We can patiently listen to all of them; including the commentary about me: how good/bad I am; how well/badly I performed; whether this or that person likes or approves of me; whether I'm OK or not. ... Eventually, instead of always being at the beck and call of that inner critic, we become free to offer our lives to Dhamma (the Truth) or to God, Allah, the One – whatever term we find meaningful (Sr Ajahn Candasiṇ, 'Mindfulness' in *Prayer and Spirituality*, Grosvenor Essay 2016, ed Harriet Harris).

Labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral

► <https://www.ed.ac.uk/labyrinth>

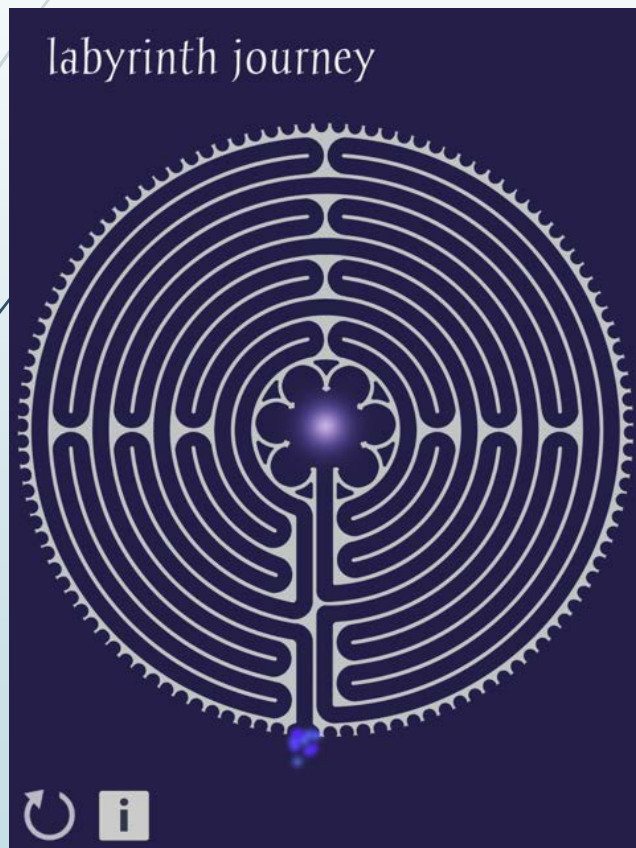


Habits of walking reveal habits of life

- ▶ One person arriving late rushed into the labyrinth carrying her large purse which looked like a pack and later realized how burdened she was by all she carries through life. Another woman who had a rock in her shoe early in the walk continued all the way without removing it because she did not want to inconvenience anyone. She realized that this was her style in life as well (Dan Johnston, Medical Centre of Central Georgia, '101 Ways to use a Classical Labyrinth', presentation to Labyrinth Society Conference, 2000, p. 6).



Labyrinth journey app





To draw a three-circuit classical labyrinth, just follow these steps.



1. Draw a cross



2. Draw a dot in each corner



3. Connect top with top right dot



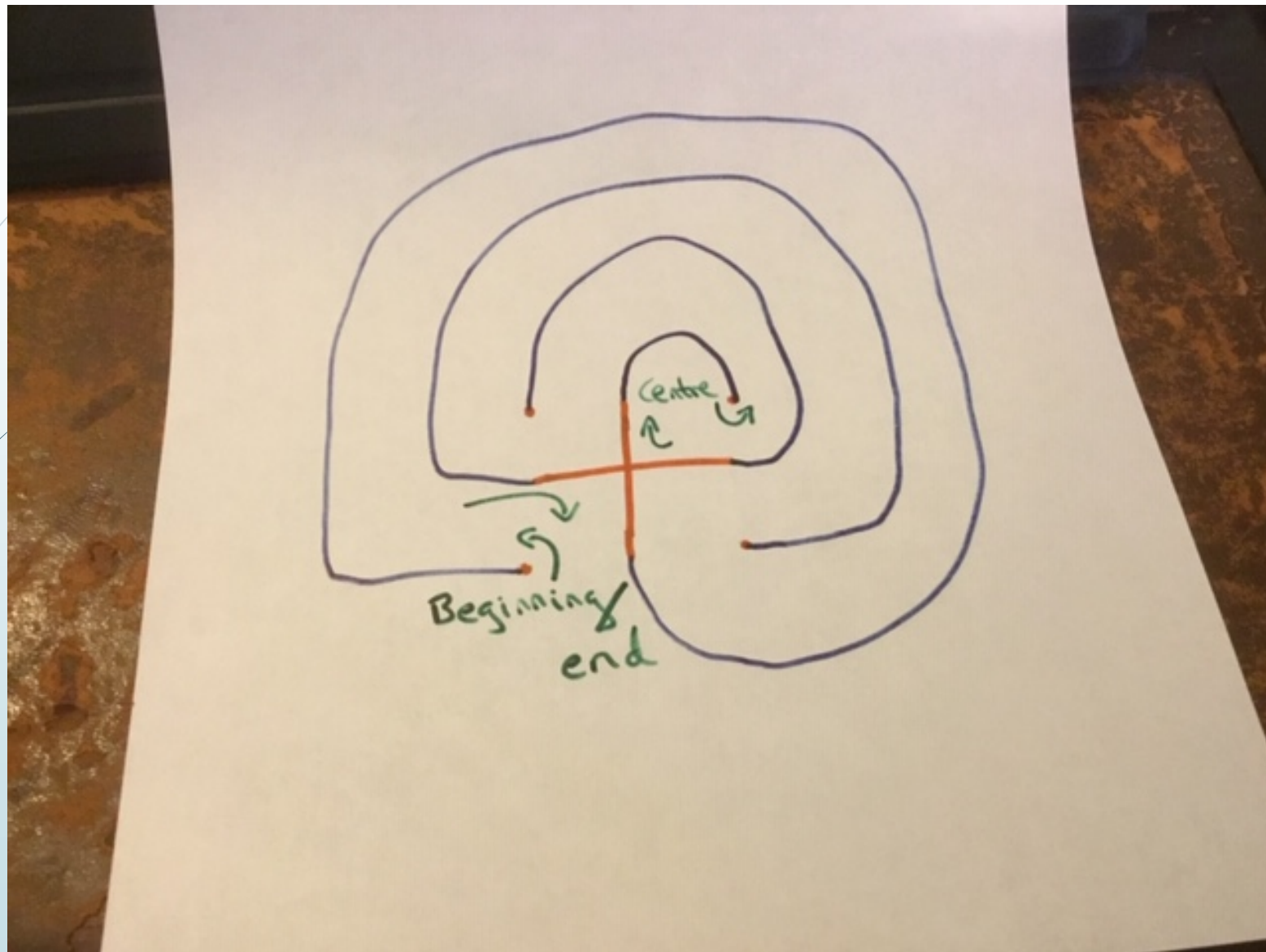
4. Connect the top left dot with the right arm of the cross



5. Connect the right arm of the cross with the bottom right dot



5. Connect the bottom left dot with the lower arm of the cross





Practice: Realising our connectedness, and acting upon it

- **Beginning:** pause to consider an encounter with nature that has transformed you in some way.
- **Path in:** as we walk towards the Centre, ask how you can show your best self to the natural world.
- **Centre:** stillness and sharing (insights revealed, could also read poems, quotations).
- **Return:** as we move out from the centre and back to the beginning: commit to one way of being your best self for the natural world.
- ***We are returned to the beginning***
- **Optional ending:** may write/share reflections at the end.

Climate Anxiety



Questions and Discussion



**Your feedback would be
appreciated!**

www.sli.do
#Anxiety



Next Session

Refreshments

**Conference will recommence
at 3.30pm**



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